

Cabrillo

National Monument

Purpose and Significance

Cabrillo National Monument was created by presidential proclamation signed by Woodrow Wilson on October 14, 1913, under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906, and is one of 391 National Park areas in the United States. The monument was established to commemorate the voyage and exploration of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo in 1542-1543. Cabrillo and his men were the first Europeans to explore San Diego Bay and what is now the West Coast of the United States.

Today the monument protects and preserves unique natural and cultural elements of San Diego and U.S. history. The major park themes are:

The voyage and discoveries of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo and 16th century Spanish Exploration.

Though it is uncertain whether Cabrillo actually set foot on the land that is now included in the park, his landing site and areas he visited within San Diego Bay are visible from the outstanding vistas afforded from the monument. His arrival in what is now San Diego Bay (which Cabrillo named San Miguel) on September 28, 1542 marked the first arrival of non-Native American Indian peoples to the West Coast.

The Old Point Loma Lighthouse

The 150-year-old lighthouse, one of the first eight constructed on the West Coast, began operation in 1855, and served until 1891, when the present Coast Guard lighthouse was built. Today the Old Point Loma Lighthouse is furnished to reflect the 1880s period when it was actively maintained by Lighthouse Keepers, Assistant Keepers and their families who lived in the sturdy stone building.

The rocky intertidal area on the Pacific Coast

Being the only federally protected tidepools on the southern California mainland, the intertidal zone at Cabrillo National Monument protects a variety of sea life that is considered rare or endangered. Group (10 or more) visits to the tidepool area are by reservations only. Groups can make reservations by calling (619) 557-5450, ext. 2231. For more information about tidepool permits, visit the park website at www.nps.gov/cabr/planyourvisit/tidepool-permits-for-groups.htm.

Coastal Sage and Chaparral ecology

Once the predominant vegetation of the San Diego coast, this ecosystem has now diminished to remnants of its former size due to development and introduction of non-native plants. The park, along with the Point Loma Ecological Conservation Area, preserves a remaining oasis of this ecosystem, one of the most sensitive in the world.

The World War I and II fortifications and military use of Point Loma.

Established as a military reserve in 1852, Point Loma remains the site of coast artillery gun batteries and observation lookouts from both World Wars.

The development and growth of San Diego and the Ongoing Relationships between People and their Environment

San Diego was established with the founding of the Mission San Diego de Alcalá in 1769 and has grown to become the second largest city in California and the sixth largest in the United States. The view of the city and Pacific Ocean from Cabrillo National Monument affords an outstanding look at the city and the development that has occurred since Cabrillo's arrival, underscoring the intimate relationship between humans and the terrestrial and marine environments.

Visitors to Cabrillo National Monument will find a variety of sites and activities that preserve and interpret these unique elements of the park. Cabrillo National Monument holds a valuable place as a major site in the protection of America's cultural and natural heritage.

The Pacific Gray Whale migration

During the annual return migration of the Pacific Gray Whales from their feeding grounds in the Arctic Ocean to their calving lagoons of Baja California, Mexico, the whales come within sight of visitors at Cabrillo National Monument. Tens of thousands of visitors come to the park during the migration season from late December through early March to catch a glimpse of these enormous sea mammals.